



Australian Government
The Treasury

TREASURY
PORTFOLIO MINISTERS



PETER COSTELLO

Treasurer

11 March 1996 - 3 December 2007

Speech of 27/06/2007

**LAUNCH OF
2006 CENSUS
ABS DATA PROCESSING CENTRE
MELBOURNE**

**10 AM
27 JUNE 2007**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Today I release the results of the 2006 Australian Census.

These results tell us about ourselves and our country – our numbers, our age, where we live, how much we are paid.

The Census forms the basis for our electoral system, the provision of services and policy to meet the challenges that we face.

Australians are living longer, the proportion of the population of retirement age is increasing, women outnumber men and in two day's time our population will pass 21 million.

Over the last five years our population has increased around 1.3 million with natural increase (births less deaths) a little over 600,000 and immigration (less emigration) a little under 600,000.

Let me give you a snapshot of some of the findings of Census 2006:-

The average age in Australia is 37 years old, compared to 34 in 1996.

The most common family type is a couple with children. The average number of children living in a couple family with children under 15 is 2.16. Nine out of ten couple families with young children live in a separate house with an average of four bedrooms. Almost two-thirds of these families are paying off a mortgage.

Females continue to outnumber males in 2006 – for every 100 females there were 97 males. The areas with the highest proportion of females are in Western Australia's Peppermint Grove and the ACT suburb of Deakin.

The proportion of people born overseas remained unchanged since 1996 at 22 per cent. In addition to this, 18 per cent of people born in Australia had at least one parent born overseas, so over 40 per cent of the population was either born overseas or had a parent born overseas. Since 1996 the groups which increased the most in number were those born in New Zealand (~98,000), China (~96,000), and India (~70,000). The most common foreign language spoken at home is Chinese (Cantonese 1.2%, Mandarin 1.1%), followed by Italian (1.6%), and Greek (1.3%).

The median household income range in 2006 was \$1000-\$1199 per week. This is higher than the 1996 median of \$600-\$699 per week; in 2006 dollars this was \$778-\$906 per week.

One in five Australians engages in voluntary work.

Women do more than twice as many hours of unpaid domestic work than men. Young people aged 15-29 do the least amount of domestic work, with 26% doing no housework at all.

Whilst marriage is still the norm for couples, and the absolute number of marriages has increased, the proportion of Australians in wedlock has declined in the last five years from 51.4% to 49.6%. This is the lowest proportion since

1911. The principal driver is an increase in those never married from 31.6% to 33.2%, and an increase in those divorced from 10.8% to 11.3%.

Ageing population

Even though Australia's population continues to grow, 2006 Census data illustrates that it is ageing. The age group of under 15s decreased as a proportion of all people from 20.8 per cent to 19.8 per cent over the last five years.

By contrast, there are increasing numbers of those aged 65 and over. Between 2001 and 2006, the proportion of those aged 65 and over increased, from 12.6 per cent to 13.3 per cent.

The ageing of the population becomes even more apparent when looking at the increase of those aged 85 and over. Since 1986, the proportion of this age group has doubled from 0.8 per cent to 1.6 per cent.

The 2006 Census also illustrates the proportion of working age people, those aged 15 to 64 years, remained relatively stable between 2001 and 2006. However the number aged 55 to 64 years experienced a large increase in numbers. This age group increased as a proportion of the total population from 9 per cent to 11 per cent.

By 2047, the proportion of the population aged 65 and over will almost double to 25 per cent. Projected population data shows that the next decade will experience a shrinking of the working population. For example, there are currently 5 people of working age to support each person aged 65 and over. By 2047, there will be only 2.4 people to every person aged 65 and over.

This will affect labour force demographics. Although Australia's population is growing, the proportion of those at working age is projected to decrease. This is partially because there will be larger numbers of people moving into retirement age, and smaller numbers entering the labour force.

As people live longer and healthier lives they are able to participate as productive workers for a longer period. A flexible labour force allows those who are able to continue working in the workforce to do so if they wish.

Birth Rates

Another aspect of the 2006 Census concerns one of the most fundamentally important issues for Australia – that of the birth rate.

Ever since the early 1960s Australia's birth rate has been trending downwards, a phenomenon it has had in common with practically every developed country in the world.

For some countries like Italy, Japan and South Korea this declining birth rate has reached alarming proportions, and while Australia has never reached those levels, it was still of concern to myself and the government that our fertility rate was falling so far.

We introduced a number of pro-family and pro-baby policies, including a baby bonus and increased family payments. I also gave moral encouragement to families to have more children - "one for mum, one for dad, and one for the country."

Something appears to have worked. The 2006 Census shows that there has been a turnaround in the number of births in Australia.

Preliminary figures show that the number of births in Australia in 2006 was 266,000 - the highest number since 1971 and the second highest in Australian history.

I think that the improvement in the number of births reflects a greater sense of economic security for families, with more people in work than ever before.

The greater number of parents willing to have families, and have larger families, is a vote of confidence in Australia's future.

This is a good thing, because if we are able to increase the number of children and young people in our society over the long term, then it will help us cope with the ageing of the population.

However there is still a long way to go. While there is an upturn in the number of babies, and an increase in the Total Fertility Rate which bottomed at 1.727 in 2002/03 and has now increased to 1.831 in 2005/06, the fertility rate is still below replacement level.

Population 21 million

Although the Census is a snapshot of Australia's population on Census night, the ABS accounts for people missing by using Census and other data to compile population estimates for 30 June 2006.

Using data from the 2006 Census, the ABS' preliminary population estimates at 30 June 2006 was 20.7 million people. This is an increase of 1.3 million people since 2001 and 2.4 million people since 1996.

Over the last five years (2001-06), all states and territories recorded a positive population increase. Queensland experienced the largest percentage gain, increasing 13 per cent in the five year period. The smallest percentage gain was experienced by New South Wales and South Australia, increasing only 4 per cent each. Tasmania, when compared with the previous census period, experienced the largest change to its population growth, changing from negative to positive growth.

There are two key components that make up Australia's population growth; natural increase and net overseas migration – between 2001 and 2006 they contributed almost equally.

Using the 2006 Census results, **the ABS calculates that Australia will reach a population of 21 million in two days time, the 29th of June.** I welcome the achievement of this “Turning 21”. I have a view that as a big country we still have room to expand and fulfil our country's potential.

Conclusion

We are living longer, with higher incomes, better standards of housing, marrying less.

Our population is ageing but in very recent times there has been a pick-up in fertility.

We are one of the few countries in the developed world to have turned up the national fertility rate. This is heartening. It is a vote of confidence in our future prospects.

I would like to thank the ABS for their excellent work in putting together Census 2006 and today it is my pleasure to symbolically launch the Census data for the Australian people, with this national snapshot.